

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9017

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

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AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 0656

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: LIMITED BUT UNFORTUNATE CHANGES IN CABINET

SUMMARY: ON JANUARY 11 THE PRIME MINISTER NAMED BRAHMANDANDA REDDY MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS, K.D.MALAVIYA MINISTER FOR STEEL AND MINES, AND B. O. MAURYA MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE. FOR THE RECORD, MINISTER OF STATE SHER SINGH MOVED FROM AGRICULTURE TO COMMUNICATIONS, MINISTER OF STATE M. B. RANA FROM TRANSPORT AND SHIPPING TO INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, AND DEPUTY MINISTER P. K. MUKHERJEE FROM INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT TO TRANSPORT AND SHIPPING.

THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HAS GROWN FROM 57 TO 60 MEMBERS--19 CABINET MINISTERS, 19 MINISTERS OF STATE, AND 22 DEPUTY MINISTERS. THE CABINET ADDITIONS PARTIALLY RESTORE THE "LEFT-RIGHT" IDEOLOGICAL BALANCE WHICH HAD DRIFTED TO THE "RIGHT" DURING 1973 AND ACCENTUATE THE OVER-REPRESENTATION OF UTTAR PRADESH. END SUMMARY.

1. REDDY, A VETERAN CENTRIST WHO WAS ADROITLY EASED OUT AS ANDHRA PRADESH CHIEF MINISTER DURING THE PRIME MINISTER'S 1971 ANTI-BOSSISM CAMPAIGN, REMAINED THE MOST POWERFUL SINGLE

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LEADER IN ANDHRA, WITH FOLLOWERS IN THE INTEGRATIONIST AND BOTH

SEPARATIST CAMPS. HIS APPOINTMENT TACITLY RECOGNIZES THAT HIS LOCAL STRENGTH WILL BE NEEDED SUCCESSFULLY TO IMPLEMENT THE SIX-POINT FORMULA TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF ANDHRA PRADESH. IT ALSO RESTORES THE REGIONAL BALANCE UPSET BY THE EARLIER DEPARTURE OF ANDHRA'S K. L. RAO FROM THE CABINET.

2. MALAVIYA, WHO IN 1963 RESIGNED AS OIL, MINES AND FUEL MINISTER UNDER A CLOUD OF CORRUPTION CHARGES, HAS RETURNED TO PROMINENCE AT THE AGE OF 69. WHILE IN THE WILDERNESS HE KEPT BUSY WITH DIVERSE PRO-COMMUNIST FRONTS; AS MINISTER, HE WILL PRESUMABLY GIVE UP THE PRESIDENCY OF THE ALL-INDIA PEACE AND SOLIDARITY ORGANIZATION. HE IS RUMORED RECENTLY TO HAVE TURNED DOWN AN OFFER TO GO AS AMBASSADOR TO MOSCOW. HIS APPOINTMENT TO AN IMPORTANT SUBSTANTIVE MINISTRY WITH EXTENSIVE DEALINGS WITH THE USSR PARTIALLY RESTORES THE STRENGTH OF THE PRO-COMMUNIST FACTION IN THE CONGRESS, WEAKENED BY THE DEATH OF KUMARAMANGALAM IN MAY.

3. MAURYA IS A 45-YEAR-OLD "HARIJAN" LEADER AND FORMER LAW LECTURER AT ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY WHO JOINED THE CONGRESS LESS THAN THREE YEARS AGO. HE AND MALAVIYA, A BRAHMIN, ARE BOTH INFLUENTIAL IN THEIR NATIVE UTTAR PRADESH (UP); THEIR APPOINTMENT FURTHER ACCENTUATES THE OVER-REPRESENTATION OF THAT STATE AT THE CENTER AND UNDOUBTEDLY WAS MADE WITH AN EYE ON THE COMING ELECTIONS. MAURYA'S LEFTIST REPUTATION STEMS FROM HIS ACTIVITIES AS A "HARIJAN" CHAMPION. HE IS NO CPI APOLOGIST BUT IS USUALLY FOUND ON THE RADICAL SIDE OF BOTH DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY ARGUMENTS. HE IS A FERVENT OPPONENT OF "FAMILY PLANNING", ARGUING FRANKLY THAT HARIJANS' POLITICAL POWER IS DEPENDENT ON VOTING STRENGTH. HIS RADICALISM IS ALSO TRACEABLE TO RIVALRY WITH CENTRIST/CONSERVATIVE DEFENSE MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAM, WHOM HE PERHAPS HOPES TO CHALLENGE OR SUCCEED AS THE UNTOUCHABLES' NATIONAL LEADER. DESPITE THE PRIME MINISTER'S BACKING, "HARIJAN" HOUSING AND PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER BHOLA PASWAN SHASTRI MADE NO DENT IN RAM'S SUPPORT; SHASTRI WILL REPORTEDLY SOON RETIRE FROM ACTIVE POLITICS AS A GOVERNOR, POSSIBLY IN ANDHRA PRADESH.

4. COMMENT: MALAVIYA'S APPOINTMENT IS BAD NEWS FOR AMERICAN INVESTORS INTERESTED IN INDIAN MINERALS OR MINING. HE IS ALMOST UNIFORMLY VIEWED AS BEING IN THE SOVIET POCKET AND WE ANTICIPATE

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HE WILL BE MOST DIFFICULT IN DISCUSSING POSSIBLE WESTERN INVESTMENT IN THE MINERALS SECTOR. WE SEE HIS APPOINTMENT AS FUNDAMENTALLY A POLITICAL MOVE BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO PLACATE THE SOVIETS AND THE CONGRESS LEFTISTS AND CPI WHOM SHE MAY BE ON THE VERGE OF QUIETLY KNIFING IN THE UP STATE ELECTIONS.

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